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C O N F I D E N T I A L CHENNAI 000110

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/25/2018

TAGS: ASEC IN PGOV PHUM PTER

SUBJECT: ANDHRA PRADESH "GREYHOUNDS" DOG MAOISTS IN
NEIGHBORING CHHATTISGARH

REF: 2007 CHENNAI 500

Classified By: Consul General David Hopper for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: Police contacts confirmed media reports of a joint counter-insurgency operation involving police units from the Indian states of Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh. 17 Maoists insurgents were killed in a March 18 raid, including at least one important Maoist leader, according to contacts. Police also recovered numerous weapons at the scene, which according to media reports, suggests that the police had come across an important Maoist leadership meeting. Andhra Pradesh's elite anti-Maoist force (known as the "Greyhounds") took part in the operation in neighboring Chhattisgarh, marking a welcome new development in intra-state cooperation against the Maoist threat. END SUMMARY.

¶12. (C) On March 20 Andhra Pradesh Inspector General of Police Durga Prasad, who leads the Greyhounds, confirmed media reports that his unit conducted a March 18 joint operation with police in neighboring Chhattisgarh. He said Greyhound units operated in concert with Chhattishgarh police, ambushing Maoist insurgents in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, approximately ten miles from the Andhra Pradesh border. Prasad confirmed that the police killed 17 Maoists (including six women) while suffering no fatalities of their own. He said the dead included one important state committee leader and that the remains of all of the dead Maoists had been handed over to villagers. Prasad noted that the police recovered an unspecified number of semi-automatic rifles, including AK-47s, from the scene. Prasad said he expects the Maoists to retaliate for the killings, especially in light of the fact that the dead included a leadership figure.

¶13. (U) Media reports described events of March 18 as a major setback to the Maoists, saying the 17 deaths comprised the worst single-day death toll for the Maoists in sixteen years. The joint police force reportedly came across a meeting of Maoist leaders and both sides fired more than 500 rounds in the ensuing firefight. A Times of India article said "two landmines, one AK-47, three semi-automatic rifles, and twelve other weapons" were recovered from the site, adding that "sources also claimed that the huge seizure of weapons indicated that top state committee leaders and district committee members had assembled" for the meeting. It went on to speculate that Gajerla Ravi (aka Ganesh), a member of the North Telangana

Special Zonal Committee (NTSZC), was killed in the encounter, noting that the NTSZC is the Maoist's second most powerful body after the Central Committee. The same article quoted K Varavara Rao, an unofficial Maoist spokesman, as condemning the incident as a "fake encounter" by the police in which Central Reserve Police Force units (central government paramilitary forces) participated along with the Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh police. Rao reportedly said he was not aware whether any Maoists leaders were killed on March 18.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: The Greyhounds are the first, and most successful, state police force specially established to defeat the Maoists. They have had considerable success, more or less pushing the Maoists out of Andhra Pradesh (reftel). But Andhra Pradesh's success has become the problem of its neighboring states. Chhattisgarh has had particular difficulty dealing with the Maoists who have retreated there from Andhra Pradesh. Greyhounds chief Prasad told us in August 2007 that he worried about Chhattisgarh's ability to handle the Maoists and that his unit was helping train the police there. But at that time he also said then that his forces confined themselves to policing on their side of the border. The events of March 18 -- with the Greyhounds bringing their more skilled and better equipped forces over the border into Chhattisgarh to take the fight to the Maoists -- are a welcome development in the generally spotty record of intra-state cooperation in the fight against the Maoist threat. END COMMENT.

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